



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

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**\$ 3.5 million GEAR UP grant helps
economically disadvantaged students**

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster today announced a \$ 3.5 million grant to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction for the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program that encourages and prepares economically disadvantaged middle and high school students to attend college.

GEAR UP awards, granted through the U.S. Department of Education, are designed to help schools break the cycle of poverty by serving the needs of economically disadvantaged children. GEAR UP funds support community-based education initiatives such as after-school tutoring programs, professional development training for teachers, mentoring programs, and classes to prepare students for college entrance examinations.

The goals of GEAR UP are to retain students in middle and high school, help them graduate from high school, and enroll them in postsecondary educational programs. “Economically disadvantaged students often struggle to stay in school,” noted Burmaster. “The GEAR UP grants can help encourage these young people to choose career paths that challenge and interest them, and help families find resources to finance their child’s postsecondary education.”

The DPI’s Milwaukee-based Office of Urban Education and its Wisconsin Educational Opportunities Program (WEOP) secured the competitive grant. “Our efforts on behalf of economically disadvantaged students in both urban and rural areas through programs like WEOP have benefited thousands of students,” said Burmaster. “This grant is further evidence of our commitment to helping adolescents see the possibilities before them and work to achieve their goals and aspirations.”

Grant funds will help WEOP staff serve 3,000 low-income middle and high school students in the school districts of Ashland, Bayfield, D.C. Everest, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, Racine,

(more)

South Shore, Washburn, and Wausau. In many locations, districts contract with local service providers or community centers, such the Bray Community Center in Racine and the United Community Center in Milwaukee.

The DPI is one of 24 states awarded a GEAR UP state grant. GEAR UP partnership grants also were awarded to the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. It is anticipated that GEAR UP grants will continue with a similar level of funding each year through Aug. 31, 2010.

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